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Author
Martin, Keavy

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Is an Inuit Literary History Possible?

KEAVY MARTIN

> *My father had a short wave radio, and I remembered how my grandmother Jeannie enjoyed listening to the radio and twisting the dial for signals. Living in the bush there were not many radio programs to find. Once in a while, she would come across the BBC and sometimes they would play Greenlandic Inuit songs. Greenlanders are well known for their singing and they have beautiful songs. She would call us to gather around the radio, saying, "You have to listen to this. These are our relatives who live in faraway lands." And while we listened to these songs, she would tell us that even though they live in a distant place called Akukituk (Inuktitut for Greenland), we were all one people and that someday we were all going to get together.*
>
> —Mary Simon, *Inuit: One Future—One Arctic*

In 1921, the Greenlandic anthropologist Knud Rasmussen set out to travel twenty thousand miles by dog team across Inuit Nunaat—the Inuit homeland. During this three-year journey—the famous Fifth Thule Expedition—Rasmussen was struck by the similarities in the language and culture of Inuit communities across the entire Arctic. Considering the geographical and historical distance between groups of Inuit, Rasmussen observed that "it would be natural for the language and traditions of the various tribes to have lost all homogeneity. Yet the remarkable thing I found was that my Greenland dialect served to get me into complete understanding with all the tribes."[1] The Inuit people may have been composed of widespread regional groups, but their language and literary traditions told a different story. They spoke of a connection that surpassed geographical and historical distance.

This hypothesis was confirmed in 1977, when Inuit representatives from Alaska, Arctic Canada, and Greenland gathered in Barrow, Alaska, for the inaugural meeting of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC).[2] Since the time of Rasmussen's journey, a great deal had changed in the North: the fur trade had collapsed, and southern administrations had significantly expanded

Keavy Martin is an assistant professor of Aboriginal literatures at the University of Alberta. She is currently at work on the book-length manuscript, *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature in Nunavut,* and is involved in a collaborative project to re-edit the prison writings of Anthony Apakark Thrasher.

their management of Arctic peoples and resources.[3] As Mary Simon, current president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami explains, "As a means of insuring protection of Inuit culture and the Arctic's resources, [the delegates at Barrow] believed it necessary to establish a unified position on . . . issues that might affect their people and homelands."[4] The council laid down a series of resolutions, which began as follows:

> WHEREAS, the Inuit of Greenland, Alaska and Canada are *one indivisible people with a common language, culture, environment and concerns*; and
> WHEREAS, the Inuit of the circumpolar region declares the oneness of its culture, environment and land and the wholeness of the homeland and that it is only the boundaries of certain nation states that separate us; and
> WHEREAS, we have met in the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference held in Barrow, Alaska, from June 13–18, 1977, to discuss our communal aspirations and concerns; and
> WHEREAS, we wish to reaffirm our right to self-determination; and
> WHEREAS, there is a need for an international organization of Inuit to study, discuss, represent, lobby and protect our interests on the international level;
> NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:
> 1. That the Inuit Circumpolar Conference is formed. . . .[5]

This approach seemed to mark a radical shift in Inuit self-perception, particularly as the assembled delegates agreed upon the use of the label *Inuit* to refer to their peoples as a whole.[6] As André Légaré points out, "the generic term 'Inuit' was used by [regional] groups only when they were confronted, in traditional times, with Indian groups or more recently, with Europeans."[7] For many residents of Arctic communities, the term *Inuit,* which can be translated as "the people," is not always the identity marker of choice. Alaskan Inuit are more commonly known as Yupiit, Alutiit, or Iñupiat, while residents of the Mackenzie Delta region are called Inuvialuit.[8] Even in areas where the term *Inuit* is employed, the more common and often more meaningful labels are the region-specific *-miut* appellations.[9] However, for the purposes of solidarity, the members of the ICC adopted an umbrella term. Michèle Therrien explains, "According to [the Inuit gathered at Barrow], [the ethnonym *Inuit*] could be used without undermining local designations. This choice was made in response to a situation where it seemed important to emphasize the unity, and not the disparity, of a large cultural group concerned with its future as a distinct society."[10] But for Michael Amarook, then-president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, a change in Inuit self-conception was apparent: "For the first time in history," he said, "we have become one people."[11]

Inuit Nunaat extends across the entire Western hemisphere, but the borders of Russia, the United States, Canada, and Greenland segment it. Further divisions exist within the nation-states as well; in Canada alone, the self-governing Inuit political regions include the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and

Nunatsiavut (Labrador). As one might expect, the literature of this territory is likewise varied and complex. I use the term *literature* in an inclusive sense to refer to any work of art in the medium of language—including storytelling and song—rather than in the strict sense that refers to letters and thus privileges written forms of expression. The texts that make up the Inuit literary corpus span thousands of years and a number of genres: they include the classic stories and songs of the oral tradition, more recent memoirs and life writing, elders' oral histories, and contemporary fiction, poetry, and film. Local contexts are highly important to these works, as the literature of each region takes on the particular flavors of its geography and political history.

Lands and literatures are closely connected, and the fate of one tends to be inevitably reflected in the other. Just as southern prospectors and administrators have made forays into Arctic territory, Inuit intellectual culture has been similarly mined and managed. Literary exports from the Arctic include the story of Sedna, the songs collected by Rasmussen, and the film *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner).*[12] Nonetheless, Inuit continue to suffer from underrepresentation in southern university classrooms. Even in Native literature classes, Inuit writers and storytellers have a marginal presence, if they are present at all. In the 1980s, Robin McGrath wrote a dissertation and a series of articles on Inuit literature, and in 1988, Penny Petrone published the collection *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English.*[13] Yet these trailblazing texts failed to ignite a great deal of interest amongst literary scholars, and in a 2004 *Windspeaker* article, the Inuk writer and politician Zebedee Nungak spoke out about the difficulties that Inuit writers face in distributing their work: "With nobody actively seeking such material," he grieved, "any number of journals, diaries, and manuscripts gather dust in many an obscure shelf."[14]

In 1977, the unification of Inuit into "one indivisible people with a common language, culture, environment and concerns" happened largely for strategic reasons: to gain recognition and respect from southern governments.[15] Could a similar strategy be employed in order to increase recognition of Inuit literature in classrooms and printing houses? What would happen if literary critics were to follow the example of the ICC and unite texts from across Inuit Nunaat into a common literature, or literary tradition? This article will ask whether the strategic concept of an Inuit circumpolar literature is justifiable, even as a temporary measure. Is an Inuit literary history possible?

An Inuit "Nation"?

This type of question has been under discussion in indigenous literary studies for a number of years now, in particular since the 1999 publication of Craig Womack's (Oklahoma Creek/Cherokee) *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism.*[16] Building on Robert Warrior's (Osage) principles of intellectual sovereignty, Womack constructed a tribal-specific study of Creek literature and argued that indigenous oral traditions were deeply political texts, inseparable from the concerns of their communities.[17] Since the appearance of *Red on Red,* a number of other indigenous critics have published studies that draw upon the specific intellectual traditions of different Indian nations,

and together they have formed a critical school now known as indigenous "literary nationalism." In 2006, the Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice published *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*, and, in 2008, the collectively edited anthology *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* included a number of tribal-specific studies by indigenous scholars, including Phillip Carroll Morgan (Choctaw), Christopher B. Teuton (Cherokee), Janice Acoose (Saulteaux/Métis), Lisa Brooks (Abenaki), and Tol Foster (Creek).[18] In the meantime, renewed attention has been given to earlier scholars, such as Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), who have based their critical methodologies on the specificities of their home communities.[19] Further afield, the Canadian poet Robert Bringhurst's somewhat controversial work has drawn attention to the genius of traditional Haida literature, while Richard Dauenhauer and Nora Marks Dauenhauer (Tlingit) have worked tirelessly to document Tlingit oral traditions.[20] These scholars have made it apparent that generalized approaches to indigenous literatures are insufficient, as they fail to account for the distinct artistic and intellectual traditions of individual nations.

Indigenous literary nationalism, however, places a great deal of importance on national specificity. With its interest in the foundations of individual literary traditions and in the social and political relevance of texts, literary nationalism resonates in many ways with the discipline of literary history.[21] As a critical practice, literary history has origins in the nationalist movements of nineteenth-century Europe; it often focuses on the ways in which the literary productions of particular groups embody national character or identity.[22] Literary historians are witnesses to the ways in which nations narrate themselves. David Perkins, author of *Is Literary History Possible?*, points out that although literary history has swung in and out of favor, it has become newly relevant in the context of late-twentieth-century social justice movements, which "produce literary histories for the same motives, essentially, that inspired the national and regional literary histories of the nineteenth century. These groups turn to the past in search of identity, tradition, and self-understanding."[23] The literary nationalists might describe this project slightly differently, as, for example, Warrior did, when he wrote *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions,* or as Kimberley M. Blaeser did in "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center."[24] After centuries of state-sponsored attempts at suppressing indigenous cultures, Native critics are working to *reclaim* precolonial literary traditions; in this way, they resist being confined to the experience of colonization.[25]

Justice writes, "Indigenous nationhood is a necessary ethical response to the assimilationist directive of imperialist nation-states."[26] Similarly, literary nationalism—which promotes indigenous nationhood through its study of tribal literatures—is strategic; it works to bolster the threatened sovereignty of Native peoples. Yet tribal nationalism, Justice argues, is distinct from the nationalism of nation-states, in part because of "the ability of Indigenous nationalism to extend recognition to other sovereignties without that recognition implying a necessary need to consume, displace, or become absorbed by those nations."[27] Likewise, the indigenous literary nationalists have always been careful to point out that theirs is not the only acceptable way of reading

indigenous texts. As Womack put it in *Red on Red*, "I believe that *one approach* to Native literatures should be a study of the primary culture that produces them."[28] Despite this commitment to critical tolerance, indigenous literary nationalism proceeds always with the cautionary tales of twentieth-century state nationalism in mind. At the same time that they describe the literary traditions of particular indigenous nations, the literary nationalists must grapple with the risks of their approach—in particular, with the possibility that it may mimic the homogenizing activities of nation-states.

The danger is that in articulating national literatures strategically—in order to resist the assimilationist tactics of the colonial nation-states—critics may inadvertently downplay the diversity that exists *within* tribal traditions. Justice returns to this issue in his contribution to *Reasoning Together*. Reflecting on his work in Cherokee literary history, he observes that "no community is monolithic and without dissent or even conflicting ideas about what exactly constitutes the group. . . . My initial supposition that there was a single, unitary idea of 'Cherokeeness' was both naive and, ultimately, impossible, especially given the long and tangled realities of Cherokee social history."[29] The dangers of emphasizing coherence and unity exist whether the critic is imagining nations or literatures; the possibility of creating totalizing narratives is one that literary history as a discipline has struggled with.[30] As Perkins explains, "The writing of literary history involves selection, generalization, organization, and a point of view. It selects for representation only some of the texts and relevant events in the tract of past time it supposedly describes; it collects these into general entities (e.g., romanticism); it adopts a point of view toward them; and it makes them constituents of a discursive form with a beginning, a middle, and an end, if it is Aristotelian narration, or with a statement, development, and conclusion, if it is an argument."[31] In Hayden White's terms, the literary history is "emplotted" and, therefore, subject to the desires of the literary historian.[32] As a narrative, it attempts to give shape to an entire tradition and bestow a logical coherence onto that tradition's components.[33] It is inevitable that certain elements will be omitted, and that the specificities of individual texts will be subordinated to the character of the literature as a whole. Literary history, like literary nationalism, is therefore complicated by the diversity of the nation.

This problem is especially pertinent in the Inuit context, in which the very existence of a "nation" is in question. As the anthropologist Robert G. Williamson writes, "Traditionally, though the Eskimo conceived of themselves generally and generically as *Iniut* [*sic*]—'The People', they never had any strong sense of total ethnic-group loyalty, still less of a sense of identification on a pan-Eskimo or national scale."[34] However, if someone had asked the delegates gathered at Barrow whether an Inuit nation could be said to exist, they might have said yes—although they might not have used the term *nation*. The Latin root of the word *nation* (*natio*) refers to birth and evokes a group of people connected by kinship ties.[35] When the ICC declared the existence of an Inuit "people," they were suggesting a very similar concept. I argue that as long as we do not confuse the term *nation* with the idea of the nation-state, we can think of nationhood and peoplehood as being very closely related

phenomena.[36] In an 1882 lecture given at the Sorbonne, Ernest Renan asked the question "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" or "What is a nation?"[37] He discussed the factors of shared race, language, religion, and "interests," but one by one eliminated them as the defining feature of nationhood. Geography, he conceded, is an important factor; however, the true core of the nation lies in a kind of shared consciousness amongst its members—in "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories . . . [and in] the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form."[38] This idea that nationhood is determined not by a set of shared characteristics but rather by a kind of imaginary covenant between members was later expanded upon by Benedict Anderson. The nation, Anderson said famously, "is an imagined political community."[39] It is based on a narrative of a shared common history, identity, and, often, enemy.

Reading Stories of "Others" for Nationalist Themes

When the ICC declared its constituents to be "one indivisible people with a common language, culture, environment and concerns," they formed the quintessential imagined community, or nation.[40] Although the words spoken at Barrow certainly gave the concept of an Inuit nation a new kind of reality, I would argue that it was not an idea conjured out of thin air. Rather, the resolutions voiced in 1977 were the product of a long history of precolonial Inuit national sentiment. Evidence of this is to be found in the traditions of stories across Inuit Nunaat—stories that take as a central theme the idea of what it means to be Inuit, often by describing what it means to *not* be Inuit.

The classic Inuit stories cover a wide range of topics, yet a consistent theme is the presence, and sometimes the threat, of other (non-Inuit) beings. As the editors of *Uqalurait: An Oral History of Nunavut* point out, "Inuit folklore is full of stories about the murderous nature of strangers."[41] Even when they are not murderous, these Others tend to be characterized by a wonderfully disconcerting weirdness. In the brother and sister stories, for instance, a pair of traveling siblings visit the land of the *kukilingiattiaraaluit*, the "ones with the long nails," and the *itiqanngittut*, the "ones without anuses."[42] Other stories tell of visits to villages of bears and of a whole range of *uumajuit* (animal spirits) and *inurajait* (human-like beings).[43] This latter category includes *ijirait* (shape-shifting land spirits, or "hidden ones"), *inukpasugjuit* (giants), and *inugarulligaarjuit* (little people), to name only a few.[44] These Others often live in ways that parallel Inuit life, but they inevitably reveal some (frequently horrific) difference, which marks them as distinctly non-Inuit, or nonhuman.

In the chapter "Reading the Oral Tradition for Nationalist Themes: Beyond Ethnography," Womack argues that classic indigenous stories have a deeply political aspect; they serve—and have always served—to articulate a national identity.[45] As Womack puts it, "oral traditions—legends and myths, if you will—performed in their cultural contexts have always been nationalistic and are told for the purpose of cultivating a political consciousness."[46] Stories provide listeners with a sense of communal identity; they describe "what it means to be from a clan, a town, a nation."[47] J. Edward Chamberlin points

out that "we all have stories that hold us in thrall and others at bay."[48] Stories of Others are an effective way of defining who we are, by reminding us of who we are not.

This sense of Otherness might also come into play in Inuit stories about their relations from different regions; however, this is not the same difference that separates Inuit from non-Inuit. Simon Anaviapik, a Tununirmiut elder, tells a story about traveling as a child to the Nattilik region.[49] At first, his family was struck by the strangeness of the other Inuit: "They seemed almost like animals to us in their own dialect." However, similarities quickly became apparent, and the strangeness fell away. "It did not take very long for the language difficulty to clear up," Anaviapik says, "That's how it is when you're all Inuit; problems are easily solved."[50]

When different Inuit regional groups encountered each other, it was likely that they would know many of the same stories. As Rasmussen recorded myths and legends in each of the communities he visited, he noted their resemblance to the versions he knew back in Greenland: "Out of fifty-two stories which I wrote down among the Padlermiut at Hikoligjuaq, no fewer than thirty were identical with ones I had already heard in Greenland, and this despite the fact that for thousands of years past, no intercourse had taken place between the two groups of people."[51] Rasmussen may have been overestimating the lack of contact between different groups of Inuit, and it may be an exaggeration to describe Inuit stories from different regions as "identical." Homogeneity, however, is not the point; the more important detail is the existence of a common tradition of stories that work to define Inuitness by raising the specter of Otherness. As Justice argues in *Reasoning Together*, "no community is monolithic and without dissent or even conflicting ideas about what exactly constitutes the group. . . . Though members of a group might differ in their understandings of that community's composition, they nonetheless work to articulate the shifty, unstable, but ultimately embodied notion of purposeful collectivity."[52]

The epic tale of Kiviuq is perhaps the prototypical articulation of the distinction between Inuit and Others. In a story told across the Arctic, the hero Kiviuq (also spelled Kivioq, Kiv(v)iok, or Keeveeok, and known in Alaska as Qayaq) is swept out to sea during a storm and spends many years—some would say thousands—exploring the lands far beyond his home and encountering a whole host of strange and terrifying beings. In one version, Kiviuq encounters a woman called Igutsaqjuaq (Big Bee [Woman]), who angrily cuts off her own eyelids when she believes them to be blocking her light.[53] Later, Kiviuq meets a man chopping driftwood who has a wide opening from his mouth through to his anus; Kiviuq has to reassure the man craftily that he did not approach him from behind and so did not look through the hole in his body. The wonderful strangeness of these characters might again be read as part of a treatise on Otherness, which further serves to remind the listeners of their own shared humanity, or normalcy. As Kiviuq wanders far from home, he explores the boundaries of the Inuit nation.

Aside from fantastic beings, the classic stories are also populated with non-Inuit people, like the Iqqiliit (Dene), the Allait or Unaliit (Cree), the

Qallunaat (white people), and the Tuniit (or Dorset, the people who inhabited the central and eastern Arctic prior to the arrival of the Thule Inuit).[54] The stories of this latter group are a mainstay of the Canadian Inuit storytelling traditions and have recently made an appearance in contemporary Inuit fiction. In the 2004 collection *Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past*, the Iglulingmiut writer Rachel A. Qitsualik published the story "Skraeling," which tells of an Inuk who encounters a group of Tuniit (and later, Vikings) during the Thule eastward migration of 1000 BC.[55] In the village of the Tuniit, the main character Kannujaq finds an Inuk boy who has lived there for his entire life. At the end of the story, the boy, Siku, leaves with Kannujaq to return to his people. As they prepare for the journey, Siku asks Kannujaq: "What . . . am I to say my mother is, if not a Tunik? *What are we*?"[56] "'I don't know,' Kannujaq replied. But he thought about a word his grandfather had used. 'Perhaps we are *Inuit*.'"[57] In this moment, it is clear that although the year is 1000 BC, it is also 1977 AD, when the ICC delegates spoke the Inuit nation into being. One might imagine that Qitsualik is writing an antecedent to the meeting at Barrow and testifying to the precolonial origins of Inuit national consciousness.

As Rasmussen points out, stories from the various regions of Inuit Nunaat do have remarkable similarities; this alone might indicate the possibility of a unified vision of the literature. However, attempts to make stories from Greenland match stories from Alaska will always require some selective listening and will by necessity downplay the unique cultural and political contexts of the different regions. A more acceptable strategy for a literary history, therefore, might be to consider the way in which the form and function of the literature—rather than its content—remains consistent. Justice, in his contribution to *Reasoning Together*, comes to the conclusion that "though there are many different ways of understanding what it is to be Cherokee—some more suited to the preservation of Cherokee nationhood, communitism, and decolonization than others—each way is still an attempt to give shape to an idea of what it is to be, think, and live Cherokee."[58] Here, the idea of the nation—and by extension the literary tradition—is not so much a clearly definable *thing* but rather a *process*. As works of Inuit literature from different regions and historical periods endeavor to describe what it means to be Inuit, they are involved in the process of nation building, or imagining communities. This is the thread that might pull them together—or if not together, at least in the same direction.

Inuit on the International Stage

The idea of an Inuit nation may not be the primary political framework of Arctic communities; it might only flicker to life in moments of encounter, as people recognize their differences from others or their similarities to each other. The rest of the time, it might be the more tangible, local realities that take precedence: the questions of Nunavut identity, Labrador dialect, or Alaskan oil drilling. But those occasional moments of unification—that theoretical sense of peoplehood, or nation—might be justification enough for an

Inuit literary nationalism. Let's not forget that this tying together—this search for connective sinews, or threads—is strategic, ultimately, as nationalisms always are.[59] Like the ICC's declaration of unity, the idea of a coherent Inuit literary tradition has the potential to confer a sense of sovereignty onto Inuit literature and to "re-affirm [its] right to self-determination."[60] An Inuit literary history might encourage students and scholars to recognize Inuit literature as a distinct and self-sufficient artistic tradition, deserving of serious study.

In the course of these discussions, readers might take a moment to ask why cohesion—whether of a people or literature—is so politically compelling. Why does a monolithic tradition get more attention than a fragmented or miniscule one? Is it part of a literary sensibility—a desire for narrative unity? Or is it pure military strategy? A nation that spans four countries is formidable, and the same goes for its literature; that kind of breadth, we think, must equal value, or at least a respectable design—as demonstrated by its ability to expand and endure. If nations and literatures are large and organized enough, then it is clearly unwise or impossible to ignore them. The current need for cohesion in studies of Inuit literature might simply be a side effect of the material's obscurity in the mainstream. The possibility of learning about Inuit literary traditions might be appealing to many students, especially with the groundwork laid by indigenous studies and Isuma Igloolik Productions.[61] However, the availability of Yupiit, Iñupiat, Inuvialuit, Nattilingmiut, Aivilingmiut, Iglulingmiut, Nunavimmiut, Nunatsiavummiut, and Kalaallit literatures for study might be a bit overwhelming for most southern students; it might send them back to the comforting embrace of John Milton or N. Scott Momaday.[62]

Although an Inuit literary history may never be able to achieve an accurate representation of the complexities of the literature as a whole, it would at least provide an entry point for students and scholars. Literary histories can never be truly thorough; this is not their purpose. As Perkins observes, "The only complete literary history would be the past itself, but this would not be a history, because it would not be interpretive and explanatory."[63] A literary history is intentionally fictional, and it entails all of the benefits that storytelling has to offer. To call history a fiction, White says, "in no way detracts from the status of historical narrative as providing a kind of knowledge. . . . [T]he encodation of events in terms of such plots structures is one of the ways that a culture has of making sense of both personal and public pasts."[64] The trouble lies only in the possibility that emplotment may occur undetected, all the while giving the impression of objectivity, factuality, and finality.

In discussing the possibility of a unified Inuit literary history, however, I am attempting to emplot quite openly and with freely available motives. In late 2009, heads of government and environmental organizations met at a United Nations conference in Copenhagen to negotiate a multinational plan for climate change mitigation.[65] During the two weeks that the meeting was in progress, however, the Obama administration granted Shell the rights to exploratory oil drilling in the Chukchi Sea off the coast of Alaska.[66] Such threats to Arctic ecology are a rallying point for the environmental movement; melting glaciers and shrinking sea ice have become powerful symbols of a global crisis. In the Canadian context, the Arctic has also become an

important political touchstone in the policies of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government, as vamped-up concerns about sovereignty threats and the control of northern shipping routes regularly appear in the prime minister's speeches. Rival Canadian political leaders visit Nunavut frequently, and each has promises for northern development and prosperity. The Arctic is no longer located on the periphery of American and Canadian national consciousness; rather, it is increasingly becoming a key player on the international political stage. For many North Americans, however, the landscape north of the tree line still has a kind of frontier status—simultaneously wild, threatened, and rich in resources. The problem is that images of frozen, treeless terrain and polar bears stranded on ice floes are telling an incomplete story about the north, and the majority of southerners are unaccustomed to thinking about the Arctic as a peopled landscape with an extensive cultural and political history. But as the changing geological and political climates continue to create challenges for northerners, this is now more than ever an essential shift in perspective.

Once Inuit sovereignty and literature have a more viable position in the southern imagination, we can look forward to specific, regional studies that take the full complexity of local history and geography into account. At the moment, however, it might be most prudent to explore the strategic potential of the ICC's narrative of Inuit cultural unity for literary studies: a unified literary history, like a unified political history, has the capacity to make space for Inuit voices to be heard in the south. So is an Inuit literary history possible? In view of the Arctic's current role as an international political chesspiece, the answer is yes; and not only that—it is necessary.

NOTES

1. Rasmussen's mother was Inuk (the singular of Inuit), and Kalaallisut (Greenlandic Inuktitut) was his first language. Knud Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America: Narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1999), xxxvi.

2. As Philip Lauritzen mentions (*Oil and Amulets: Inuit: A People United at the Top of the World* [St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1983], 23), Inuit representatives from the Chukotka region in Siberia did not attend the first Inuit Circumpolar Council (hereinafter referred to as ICC) meeting. However, they are now full members of the ICC; Mary Simon, *Inuit: One Future—One Arctic* (Peterborough, ON: The Cider Press, 1996), 14.

3. See Peter Kulchyski and Frank James Tester, *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939–63* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994) and *Kiumajut (Talking Back): Game Management and Inuit Rights 1900–70* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007); or Marybelle Mitchell, *From Talking Chiefs to a Native Corporate Elite: The Birth of Class and Nationalism among the Canadian Inuit* (Montreal, QC, and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

4. The Canadian national Inuit organization's name translates to "Inuit are united in Canada." Mary Simon, "Inuit and the Canadian Arctic: Sovereignty Begins at Home" (address, Canadian Club of Victoria, Victoria, BC, 25 September 2008),

http://itk.ca/President-Speaking-Tour (accessed 1 October 2008); Simon, *Inuit: One Future—One Arctic*, 15.

5. ICC, "Final Report—First Inuit Circumpolar Conference, 1977," Eben Hopson Memorial Archives, http://www.ebenhopson.com/icc/ICCBooklet.html (accessed 13 March 2008); emphasis added.

6. Michèle Therrien, *Le Corps Inuit (Québec Arctique)* (Paris: Société d'Études Linguistiques et Anthropologiques de France, 1987), 144.

7. André Légaré, "The Spatial and Symbolic Construction of Nunavut: Towards the Emergence of a Regional Collective Identity," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 25, no. 1–2 (2001): 159.

8. Both Iñupiat and Inuvialuit can be translated as "the real people." Therrien, *Le Corps Inuit*, 144.

9. The extension -*miut* means *people of*. Although traditional ethnonyms like Nattilingmiut or Aivilingmiut are still in use, they have now been supplemented by -miut terms for particular communities (i.e., Iqalungmiut, or the people of Iqaluit) or for new regional designations (i.e., Nunavummiut, or the people of Nunavut). Note that these are now geographic rather than ethnic markers; the term Nunavummiut can include all residents of Nunavut, including the 15% who are non-Inuit.

10. Therrien, *Le Corps Inuit*, 144; my translation.

11. Innuit Tapirisat of Canada was the previous name of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; quoted in Lauritzen, *Oil and Amulets*, 26.

12. The story of Sedna, or the origin of the sea mammals, is one of the better-known Inuit stories. For an example of a Sedna story, see "Uinigumasuittuq: She Who Never Wants to Get Married," in Alexina Kublu, "Stories," in *Interviewing Inuit Elders Volume 1: Introduction*, ed. Jarich Oosten and Frederic Laugrand (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1999), 153–61.

See Knud Rasmussen, ed., *Eskimo Poems from Canada and Greenland* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), or Edward Field, trans., *Eskimo Songs and Stories: Collected by Knud Rasmussen on the Fifth Thule Expedition* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973).

Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner), DVD, directed by Zacharias Kunuk (Igloolik, NU: Igloolik Isuma Productions, 2001).

13. Robin McGrath, *Canadian Inuit Literature: The Development of a Tradition* (Ottawa, ON: National Museums of Canada, 1984); Penny Petrone, ed., *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

14. Zebedee Nungak, "Contemplating an Inuit Presence in Literature," *Windspeaker* 22, no. 1 (April 2004), http://find.galegroup.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/itx/start.do?prodId =CPI (accessed 14 September 2008).

15. ICC, "Final Report."

16. Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

17. As articulated in Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

18. Daniel Heath Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Daniel Heath Justice, Christopher B. Teuton, and Craig Womack, eds., *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

19. Ortiz's 1981 essay "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism" (originally published in *MELUS* 8, no. 2: 7–12) was republished in the 2006 collection *American Indian Literary Nationalism* by Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, and Craig Womack (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 253–60.

20. Robert Bringhurst, trans., *A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and Their World* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 1999); Richard Dauenhauer and Nora Marks Dauenhauer, eds., *Haa Kusteeyí, Our Culture: Tlingit Life Stories* (Seattle, London, and Juneau, AK: University of Washington Press and Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 1994). Though not technically part of the indigenous literary nationalist movement, the works of Bringhurst and the Dauenhauers have related goals and concerns.

21. Womack's more recent work stresses the need for critics to place historical context at the fore. See "A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997," in Justice, Teuton, and Womack, ed., *Reasoning Together*, 3–104.

22. As David Perkins explains, "the advantages of nineteenth-century literary histories were manifold and enormous. The premise that the history of literature exhibits the development of 'the national conscience,' as [Benedetto] Croce put it, provided a sense of purpose and wide social significance of the work." David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 4.

23. Ibid., 10. See also p. 181.

24. Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*; Kimberley M. Blaeser, "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center," in *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, ed. Jeannette Armstrong (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1993), 51–62.

25. The Cherokee writer Thomas King explains this issue: "While post-colonialism purports to be a method by which we can begin to look at those literatures which are formed out of the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor, the colonized and the colonizer, the term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America. . . . [T]he idea of post-colonial writing effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization, and it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression." Thomas King, "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial," *World Literature Written in English* 30, no. 2 (1990): 11–12.

26. Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, 8.

27. Ibid., 24.

28. Womack, *Red on Red*, 25; emphasis added.

29. Daniel Heath Justice, "'Go Away, Water!': Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative," in Justice, Teuton, and Womack, ed., *Reasoning Together*, 153.

30. Linda Hutcheon, "Adventures in Literary Historyland" (keynote address, Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature Conference, Toronto, 19 September 2008).

31. Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* 19.

32. Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 1712–29.

33. As Perkins says, "Unless one perceives such syntheses, one cannot write literary history. The assumptions that the various genres, periods, schools, traditions, movements, communicative systems, discourses, and epistemes are not baseless and arbitrary groupings, that such classifications can have objective and valid grounds in the literature of the past, is still the fundamental assumption of the discipline, the premise that empowers it." *Is Literary History Possible?* 4.

34. Robert G. Williamson, *Eskimo Underground: Socio-Cultural Change in the Canadian Central Arctic*, Occasional Papers II (Uppsala, Sweden: Institutionen fór Allmän och Jämförande Etnografi vid Uppsala Universitet, 1974), 31.

35. "Nation," in *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, http://www.oed.com (accessed 13 February 2007).

36. The concept of "peoplehood," as developed by Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis in "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies," is dependent on four intertwined attributes: a shared language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and place, or territory. In *Wicazo Sa Review* (Spring 2003): 7–24. An invention of the "modern," industrialized era, nation-states are political bodies defined by a "fusion of their component populations." Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" trans., Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 10. The nation-state is a political entity that can encompass multiple "ethnic" nations and is usually endowed with various institutions for managing its citizens. As Max Weber argues in his essay "Politics as a Vocation," "a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. Hans Heinrich Gerth and Charles Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1998), 78.

37. Renan, "What Is a Nation?" 8–22.

38. Ibid., 19.

39. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

40. ICC, "Final Report."

41. John Bennett and Susan Rowley, eds., *Uqalurait: An Oral History of Nunavut* (Montreal, QC, and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 130.

42. The brother and sister stories are a series of tales that culminate in the creation of the sun and moon. See "Aningagiik: Brother and Sister Legends," in Alexina Kublu, "Stories," in Oosten and Laugrand, ed., *Interviewing Inuit Elders Volume 1*, 162–81.

43. Thomas Kusugaq, *Eight Inuit Myths/Inuit Unipkaaqtuat Pingasuniarvinilit*, trans. Alex Spalding (Ottawa, ON: National Museums of Canada, 1979), 1–14; Mariano Aupilaarjuk et al., *Interviewing Inuit Elders Volume 4: Cosmology and Shamanism*, ed. Bernard Saladin d'Anglure (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2001), 51.

44. Ijirait are also called *tarriaksuit* or *tarriassuit* (shadow people) in South/East Baffin. Aupilaarjuk, *Cosmology*, 51–54; Bennett and Rowley, *Uqalurait*, 150–59.

45. Womack, *Red on Red*, 51–74.

46. Ibid., 61.

47. Ibid., 62.

48. J. Edward Chamberlin, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?: Finding Common Ground* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2003), 2.

49. The Tununirmuit are a North Baffin Inuit group in the Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik) area. The Nattilingmiut, or Netsilingmiut (people of the place where there are seals), are from the area around Taloyoak in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut. Bennett and Rowley, *Uqalurait*, 340.

50. Ibid., 126.

51. Rasmussen, *Across Arctic America*, 87–88.

52. Justice, "'Go Away, Water!'" 153.

53. Recently, the tale was made into a film by John Houston, which features tellings of the Kiviuq story by elders Henry Evaluardjuk, Annie Peterloosie, and Samson Quinangnaq. *Kiviuq*, DVD, directed by John Houston (Halifax, NS: Triad Film Productions, 2007).

54. Iggiliit is a rather disparaging term meaning *louse eggs.* Alex Spalding, "iqqilik," in *Inuktitut: A Multi-Dialectal Outline Dictionary* (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 1998), 30. Allait is from *allaq*, or *stranger.* Lucien Schneider, in *Ulirnaisigutiit: An Inuktitut-English Dictionary of Northern Quebec, Labrador and Eastern Arctic Dialects* (Laval, QC: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1985), 19. Like Iqqiliit, the term can also denote "Indians" more generally. Qallunaat appear in the Sedna/Nuliajuk story: they are said to be descendants of the puppies that Nuliajuk had with her dog-husband, who were set afloat in a *kamik* (boot). In some versions, the rest of the puppies were sent overland to become the Indians. Aupilaarjuk et al., *Interviewing Inuit Elders Volume 2: Perspectives on Traditional Law*, eds. Frédéric Laugrand, Jarich Oosten, and Wim Rasing (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2000), 189.

55. Iglulingmuit means "the people of Igloolik" in the North Baffin region; Rachel A. Qitsualik, "Skraeling," in *Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2004), 36–66.

56. Qitsualik, "Skraeling," 65; emphasis added.

57. Ibid., 66; emphasis in original.

58. Justice, "'Go Away, Water!'" 153.

59. In Inuktitut, the word *ivaluk* can mean both *sinew* and *thread.*

60. ICC, "Final Report."

61. The makers of the film *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner).*

62. This list represents but a sampling of possible identifications under the generic "Inuit" umbrella.

63. Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* 13.

64. White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," 1716.

65. "United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen 2009," http://en.cop15.dk (accessed 28 December 2009).

66. Yereth Rosen, "Natives, Greens Seek to Block Shell Drilling Plan," *Reuters*, 15 December 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN152607920091215? (accessed 28 December 2009).